

03.02.99.R0.03 Programmatic and Administrative Substantive Changes Approval Process (SACSCOC)



Revised/Reviewed May 29, 2026
Next Scheduled Review: May 29, 2031

Procedure Summary

East Texas A&M University is responsible for compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) as a condition of its continued accreditation by SACSCOC. The University recognizes the importance of the commission's substantive change policy and understands that reporting and seeking approval before initiation of the change(s) is essential to ensure compliance with the policy and federal regulations. The institution is committed to complying with the policy.

Substantive change is defined by SACSCOC as “a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution.” Substantive change includes high-impact, high-risk changes and changes that can impact the quality of educational programs and services. SACSCOC also reserves the right to identify other changes as substantive. SACSCOC accredits an entire institution. Accreditation extends to all programs and services of an institution wherever located and however delivered. SACSCOC does not accredit individual programs, locations, or portions of an institution. However, some new programs, locations, and other institutional changes are subject to notification and/or approval as defined in the Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

This procedure is intended to support the applicable SACSCOC policy statement in its most current form, Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions, available at www.sacscoc.org. This procedure fulfills the SACSCOC requirement that member institutions have a policy and procedure to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the SACSCOC at the required time. Furthermore, this procedure identifies the process to be followed at this institution for handling substantive changes that can affect the university's accreditation. It determines how such changes are communicated to the university's accrediting organization.

Procedures and Responsibilities

1 GENERAL

- 1.1 Proponents of all academic changes must follow the procedures outlined in *03.02.99.R0.01 Academic Approval Procedure for Programs*. This procedure identifies the types of academic and administrative approvals that are required for developing and submitting program and curriculum changes. This procedure also identifies the steps required to obtain approvals from the various faculty committees, Faculty Senate, and administration before the submission is sent to The Texas A&M University System and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

- 1.2 The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison (see *Accreditation Liaison*) is the individual appointed by the President to help ensure the University complies with SACSCOC accreditation requirements and policies. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison coordinates and reports substantive changes to the Commission on Colleges. The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will utilize the university curriculum review cycle to identify substantive changes related to adding, deleting, or modifying courses and degree programs.
- 1.3 The current *SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy* with a glossary of definitions, various procedures, and parameters for the prospectus is available at www.sacscoc.org. Colleges who are proposing a program development, delivery, or change and are proposing curriculum development and change are required to seek guidance early in the process from the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine if a prospectus must be submitted and/or notification made for prior approval by SACSCOC.
- 1.4 Changes that are substantive include but are not limited to new doctoral programs; new or changed degree programs that represent a significant departure in terms of new courses; new certificate programs or other programs with awarded credentials; joint or dual degree programs with another institution; courses and programs offered through contractual agreement or consortia; new sites for delivering courses or programs, including dual enrollment or dual credit sites; changes to instructional modality; or closing.
- 1.5 Changes that are non-substantive include, but are not limited to: repackaging of existing curricula into new programs, minors, or certificates. Repackaging includes taking existing courses and curricula and redistributing the content into courses with new course numbers and descriptions, and/or minimal changes to existing courses or degrees.
- 1.6 These processes can take extensive time. Program or curriculum changes requiring a prospectus must be submitted seven or more months before expected implementation. A prospectus can take up to four months to write and revise. Further, the SACSCOC approval process can require an on-site visit by a SACSCOC Committee to evaluate the proposed change before approval. If the program or curriculum change requires SACSCOC approval and approval has not been received by the University, the program or curriculum change will not be marketed without SACSCOC Liaison's approval or implemented until the approval letter from SACSCOC is received in the President's Office.
- 1.7 In addition to the time needed for communicating approvals, implementation and inclusion in the university's catalog can be substantial, especially if the annual publishing cycle is missed.
- 1.8 Therefore, since many academic changes might be considered substantive changes by SACSCOC, a minimum of 18 months of lead time is recommended.
- 1.9 Upon the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison's final approval of the required documents, the President is responsible for informing the SACSCOC President of substantive changes.

- 1.10 The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will review this procedure annually in an Executive Leadership Team meeting. Modifications will be recommended as warranted.

2 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The Provost, as well as associate/assistant provosts, vice presidents, deans, department heads, and directors have the fundamental responsibility to be generally aware of the types of changes that could be considered substantive; ask questions of the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison; inform the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison at the earliest point possible of proposals that might be regarded as a substantive change for the University; and provide any data, information, and/or prospectus necessary to comply with SACSCOC as applicable.
- 2.2 If it is discovered that a substantive change has been implemented without SACSCOC prior notification, as required, the university administrator (e.g., Provost, dean, department head, et al.) must notify the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison who, after researching the specifics of the matter, will immediately take the required steps for notification to SACSCOC.
- 2.3 In instances where program practices are suspected to be out of compliance with this procedure or with SACSCOC policies or Principles of Accreditation, the SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will bring the matter to the attention of the Provost and the President for timely resolution.
- 2.4 The SACSCOC Accreditation Liaison will be responsible for communicating the submissions to and responses from SACSCOC to the university community.
- 2.5 The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will be responsible for maintaining a web page of official notifications and approvals from SACSCOC regarding substantive changes and for maintaining an up-to-date, comprehensive inventory showing the status of program and curriculum submissions, changes, and approvals by The Texas A&M System and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

3 COMPLIANCE AND PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

If an institution is non-compliant with Substantive Change Policy and Procedures or Standard 14.2 (Substantive change), its accreditation may be in jeopardy. An unreported substantive change may require a review of the institution's substantive change policy and procedures document by the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. Non-compliance subjects the institution to monitoring, sanction, or removal from membership. Failure to secure approval, if required, of a substantive change involving programs or locations that qualify for Title IV federal funding may place the institution in jeopardy with the U.S. Department of Education, including reimbursement of funds received related to an unreported substantive change. For additional information, refer to Unreported Substantive Change in the procedures section of the SACSCOC Substantive Change Policy and Procedures.

For a complete glossary of definitions, see the Substantive Changes for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions policy statement at www.sacscoc.org.

Related Statutes, Policies, or Requirements

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC),
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2024/01/2024PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC),
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/SubstantiveChange.pdf>

Texas Administrative Code, [Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter Q, Rule 4.274](#)

Texas Administrative Code, [Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 2, Subchapter J, Rule 2.204](#)

The Texas A&M University System [Program/Administrative Approval Submission Guidelines](#)

System Policy [11.10, Academic Program Requests](#)

University Procedure [03.02.99.R0.01 Academic Approval Procedure for Programs](#)

Revision History

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